

mind from traditional fetters that their highest merit lies. Their work was pre-eminently a work of liberation. The work of construction came later. They began the movement that was to evolve in a Bacon, a Locke, a Spinoza. They made modern freethought, modern science, possible. They discovered in a rational culture the solvent that was to dissolve the dead mass of tradition and authority.

It was in the domain of art, rather than of thought, that the creative genius of the Italian Renaissance showed itself. Here it not only revealed, it created a new world. The Middle Ages were indeed immensely great in architecture. The mediaeval cathedral is, in conception and execution, a masterpiece. It suggests both originality and boldness of idea, and, in its majesty and grandeur, stands out in striking contrast to the puniness and poverty of the achievements of the age in philosophy. In sculpture and painting, however, the Middle Ages suffered from the blight of asceticism. The ascetic conception of both man and nature distorted, cramped, the artistic sense. The mind was the victim of an ill-regulated, diseased fancy which peopled the world with evil spirits, devils, monsters, whose grim forms haunt even its most splendid buildings, saw neither the truth nor the beauty of nature, and proclaimed the human as necessarily antagonistic to the divine. In such circumstances art could only be grotesque, childish. With the change of conception from the ascetic to the rational, the humanist view of life, the emancipation of art, as well as learning and philosophy, began. Mediaeval crassness, grotesqueness, unnaturalness, disappeared before the plastic touch inspired by nature and antiquity. Turning from a mediaeval Madonna or saint to the Madonnas or saints of a Raphael, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Michael Angelo, we at once feel that a new power as well as a new aspiration has enlarged and enriched the human spirit. Here, too, we learn that old things have passed away, all things have become new. In Raphael as in Machiavelli, in Michael Angelo as in Petrarch, the revolt against tradition and system speaks with unmistakable emphasis. The subject of this art may be largely Christian or ecclesiastical; the life it delineates is that of real human beings such as a Phidias sculptured.

The influence of the Renaissance north of the Alps showed